CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/1079
3 June 1991

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

LETTER DATED 3 JUNE 1991 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF THE ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT PLAN SUBMITTED BY FRANCE ON 3 JUNE 1991

I have the honour to send you herewith the text of the arms control and disarmament plan submitted by France on 3 June 1991.

I would be grateful if you would make the necessary arrangements to publish this text as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and to ensure that it is circulated to all Member States and non-Member States participating in the work of the Conference.

(Signed) Gérard Errera

Ambassador
Representative of France
to the Conference on Disarmament

GE.91-61058/0356H

ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT PLAN

The spread of increasingly costly and destructive weapons systems is exposing the world to growing dangers. Inequalities, injustices and the imbalance of forces are conducive to threats, the arms race, and conflicts of all kinds. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction gives a global dimension to these dangers. The whole world, South and North alike, has a vital interest in halting this race and in checking this dangerous and ruinous proliferation. This concerns us all.

Our aims are clear. Chemical weapons must be eliminated. Bacteriological weapons must not be produced. Existing nuclear arsenals must be reduced to the lowest level consistent with the maintenance of deterrence. The non-dissemination of nuclear weapons remains an imperative, whereas the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is justified. The dissemination of ballistic technologies must be strictly controlled in so far as they may be used for aggressive aims. On the other hand, there is no reason to prevent cooperation in space for civilian and scientific purposes.

As regards the so-called conventional weapons, a balance of forces should be maintained, or introduced, everywhere, region by region, while respecting the right of all States to security. Arms exports are consequently to be strictly controlled and so conducted as not to contradict this action. France has already made these goals its own, and is prepared to subscribe to any improvement in existing arrangements, to any new international or multilateral commitment based on them. It has already started thinking about this issue with its partners in the European Community.

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Global arms control and disarmament presupposes action at three levels: the weapons category level, and the regional and worldwide levels.

I. CATEGORY OBJECTIVES

Each weapons category requires specific treatment, proceeding in stages if necessary. In order to achieve clearly-defined goals binding on all, France, which is constantly concerned to adapt its own regulation, proposes that concrete measures, sector by sector, should soon be taken.

1. **Prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons.** The entire international community, meeting in Paris in January 1989, acknowledged the need to complete the convention banning chemical weapons, as soon as possible. France proposed convening the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons in Geneva at ministerial level to conclude the negotiations before the end of the year. It calls on all States to become parties to the Convention from the outset.

2. **Prohibition of bacteriological weapons.** At the Review Conference of the 1972 BW Convention in September of this year, France will propose the addition of a protocol on verification.

3. **Nuclear disarmament** remains an essential goal. France supports the efforts to reduce the nuclear arsenals of the two major Powers. It confirms that it will participate in the process as soon as the conditions it specified in 1983 have been fulfilled.

At the same time, it is important to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons beyond the present five nuclear Powers.

France, which is already applying all of the terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, has in principle taken the decision to sign it and hopes that all States will accede to it.

4. **The Missile Technology Control Régime** (MTCR), which allows those now in possession of missile know-how to limit the risks of ballistic proliferation, should only be a stage towards a more general agreement, one that is geographically more extensive, better controlled and applicable to all. The agreement would lay down rules promoting civilian cooperation in space, while removing the dangers of the diversion of technology for developing a military ballistic capability. Here again, the aim would be to arrive at a situation where all States wishing to gain access to space for development purposes would cooperate in a framework guaranteeing security.

France further recommends the development of outer-space confidence-building measures in the form of a "code of conduct" for civilian and military satellites.

5. **Conventional weapons.** Conventional weapons exports must not counteract the search, region by region, for a balance of forces at the lowest possible level consistent with the right of each State to security.

The five permanent members of the Security Council - which happen to be the principal producers of conventional weapons - **are to start a round of concertation in the coming weeks aimed at determining rules of restraint.** The process could then be broadened on the occasion of the next session of the General Assembly, with a view to establishing an international register of arms sales to be kept by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Particular attention will be given, in the course of these discussions, to sales of conventional weapons in parallel markets.

The members of the European Community have already begun a process of concertation aimed at making proposals on this subject.

II. OBJECTIVES

The example of Europe is encouraging. The Europeans have moved on from the cold war to peaceful coexistence, and now to cooperation within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). They have adopted and applied security and confidence-building measures. They have signed the first disarmament agreement concerning conventional weapons. This experience cannot be transposed as such. But it does show that the arms race is not inevitable. This approach could serve as an inspiration for other initiatives in other regions.

We call for **regional security arrangements** based on the following rules:

(a) Only when the solution of conflicts is started, can this process get underway and confidence be created.

(b) Adoption by the parties concerned of **regional confidence-building and security measures.** Information is the prime condition of confidence. Transparency and confidence-building measures, i.e. mutual information on force capabilities and strengths, and on the movements of armed forces, reduce the sense of threat and paves the way for disarmament proper. For that, a framework is needed, which may be a regional organization, and means of inspection in situ and by satellite. France would be willing to disclose information available to it to **regional agencies responsible for transparency.** It would favour the transmission to such regional agencies of the means of observation, in particular those in outer space that as may be available to Europe and the United Nations.

(c) Efforts must be made, through national decisions and through negotiations, to move towards **a balance of regional forces.** Arms export policies must not run counter to this goal. Once this equilibrium has been attained, its level should progressively be lowered through negotiations providing for means of control.

(d) **Strict regional application of the category régimes laid down for nuclear, bacteriological and chemical (NBC) weapons and ballistic missiles.** That is why, at the initiative of France, United Nations Security Council resolution 687 on the cease-fire in the Gulf conflict noted that the specific constraints imposed on Iraq as regards nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as ballistic missiles, represented steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles, along with a global ban on chemical weapons. That goal should be pursued in other regions of the world.

III. The United Nations is now in a position to fully play the role it was assigned by its Charter. France considers that it is therefore for the **Security Council** to guarantee and, if necessary, to harmonize these disarmament and non-proliferation policies. The Council must encourage the signature of agreements on particular arms categories, as well as regional and multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. From the agreements reached, it would derive general rules and thus exercise a function of worldwide vigilance.

This presupposes that the members of the Security Council and in the first place its permanent members will set the example.

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